

Message Text

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43

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJECT: SENI PRAMOT'S SPEECH TO THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SUMMARY: SENI PRAMOT, LEADER OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, ADDRESSED THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AT ITS MONTHLY LUCHEON ON 20 MARCH 1974. WITH REFERENCES TO THAI HISTORY AND QUOTES OF THAI APHORISMS, HE DEALT EXTENSIVELY WITH THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN THAILAND. HE ENDED WITH AN APPEAL FOR A SENSE OF GREATER RESPONSIBILITY ON THE PART OF THE HAVES FOR THE HAVE-NOTS. ALTHOUGH HE ADDRESSED THE APPEAL TO THE ASSEMBLED BUSINESSMEN. HE CLEARLY IMPLIED A NATIONAL NECESSITY FOR THAI TO COOPERATE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. SENI OPENED BY SAYING THAT HE WAS "A LAWYER BY CHOICE AND A POLITICIAN BY FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE". HE RECALLED THE ENDEMIC TURBULENCE DURING THE 417-YEAR AYUTTHAYA PERIOD, MENTIONING THAT ON THE AVERAGE THERE HAD BEEN AN UPRISING EVERY 25 YEARS DURING THAT TIME. THE BANGKOK PERIOD, IN CONTRAST, HAD BEEN RELATIVELY CALM UNTIL 1932. WHEN THAILAND INAUGURATED A "SO-CALLED DEMOCRACY". HE DESCRIBED THAT CHANGE AS A GOVERNMENT OF THE BUREAUCRACY, FOR THE BUREAUCRACY AND BY THE BUREAUCRACY.

2. THE OCTOBER 1973. EVENTS MARKED A REAL SWITCH FROM PALACE REVOLUTIONS TO A POPULAR REVOLUTION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 41 YEARS, THE THAI PEOPLE WERE MAKING THEIR VOICES HEARD. SINCE OCTOBER, SEVERAL FORMERLY OBSCURE GROUPS HAD EMERGED. HE SAID THE FIRST IMPACT HAD BEEN ON RELATIONS BETWEEN LABOR AND

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BUSINESS. CITING A THAI PROVERB WHICH STATES THAT THOSE WITH

THE LONGER FINGERS GET THE PIE. HE SAID THAT LABOR WAS NOW REACHING OUT WITH ITS SHORTER FINGERS FOR ITS SHARE AND INDICATED SYMPATHY FOR THIS ACTION LABOR NEVERTHELESS HAS NOT GONE ON A RAMPAGE. SENI MENTIONED THE CURRENT SPATE OF COUP REMORS IN BANGKOK. AS ANOTHER MITIGATING FACTOR, HE CITED THE ARMY RESTRAIN LAST OCTOBER. "WHEN EHE PEOPLE ARE REALLY UNITED, THE ARMY WILL PROBABLY JOIN IN".

3. NEGATIVE POLITICAL FACTORS INCLUDED THE QUESTION WHICH HE SAID EVER PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE RAISE OF HOW TO BRING THE POLITICIANS, NOW LIVING OFF THEIR SPOILS ABROAD, BACK TO THAILAND TO FACE JUSTICE. HE CITED THAILAND'S SHARP INCREASE IN PUBLIC DEBT 40 BILLION BAHT. HE SAID THAT ONLY 30 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE CONTROL 70 PERCENT OF THE WEALTH (SOC) ADDITIONALLY OF THAT 30 PERCENT ONLY 10 PERCENT ARE THAI (SIC) AND 10 PERCENT ARE REALLY CHINES (SIC) CORRUPTION CONTINUES UNABATED. RICE SHORTAGES ARE A CRITICAL PROBLEM BECAUSE THE NATION CONSUMERS 10 MILLION TONS OF THE ANNUAL CROP, WHILE TWO MILLION ARE RESERVED FOR EXPORT. MERCHANTS PREFER TO DRAIN THE DOMESTIC REQUIREMENT IN ORDER TO SEND THE RICE ABROAD BECAUSE THEY MAKE MUCH MORE MONEY THAT WAY. "IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS CONFUSION SOMETHING IS BOUND TO BREAK" THE THAI ARE TRANDITIONALLY PEACABLE, BUT "WHEN BLOOD GETS IN THEIR EYES, THEY CAN RUN AMOK LIKE OTHERPEOPLE". THE SITUATION MAY WELL BECOME EXPLOSIVE UNLESS SOMETHINGIS DONE.

4. SENI CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT THERE WAS A TIME NOT SO LONG AGO WHEN LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES COULD GET AWAY WITH GRAFT MANIFESTED "IN THE FORM OF MINOR WIVES AND MAJOR MERCEDES". THE PEOPLE LOOKED ON THEM WITH A CERTAIN ENVY. THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE TODAY. THE RICH AND POOR MUST COOPERATE, AND THE RICH MUST HAVEA SENSE OF GREATER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

5. SENI METIONED TO DCM AS HE WAS LEAVING LUCHEON THAT HE IS NOW GIVING ABOUT FIVE SPEECHES A WEEK IN THE BANGKOK AREA AND WILL SOON EXTEND THIS TO OTHER AREAS. HE DOES NOT EXPECT ELECTIONS TO BE HELD UNTIL LATE IN THE YEAR.

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